



Newsletter by REPAK

EXPRESSION OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY THROUGHOUT KURDISTAN.

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In this issue of our newsletter, we focus on the role of women in negotiations and peace talks and address views from different parts of Kurdistan.



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The role of women in negotiation and peace processes

With Abdullah Öcalan's historic call for peace and a democratic society, the importance of evaluating the experiences of Kurdish women and the experiences of women in peace and solution processes in various countries has come to the fore. Steps toward peace that began during armed struggles by liberation movements have their own historical, cultural, and political realities in each country. Differences can be observed in terms of social and economic conditions, the policies of regional and hegemonic powers, and the ideology, degree of organization, and policies of liberation movements. There is no ready-made recipe that can be transferred directly from

one country to another. However, analyzing the achievements and shortcomings of the experiences of women and movements in different parts of the world provides important insights for determining the policies of Kurdish women in this historical process.

Since World War I, women from various countries and movements have made significant efforts as peace activists to change the system of male-dominated government, racism, and exploitation. The International Conference of Socialist Women in Bern and the International Women's Congress for Peace in The Hague, attended by

1,136 women from 12 countries in 1915, are examples of this. Under the leadership of the Conference of Socialist Women, the internationalist solidarity of women and workers against nationalism, militarism, capitalism, and imperialist war has been revived. This position became the basis for the Soviet Revolution and the soldiers' and workers' uprisings that brought the First World War to a halt.

„War is man-made – it must be woman-undone!“ – this sentence expresses the wisdom of the Hague Congress and was also the title of the manifesto written by Lucy Thoumaian, the Armenian delegate to the Hague Congress. The decisions and work of the delegates of the Hague Congress regarding the establishment of a permanent international court for the prosecution of war crimes, the definition of mass rape as a weapon and a war crime, the prohibition of the arms trade, the establishment of a new world economic order, and the creation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

pioneered the creation of the League of Nations (the predecessor to the UN) and international law.

Despite the fact that women, both internationally and through their own work and social networks, have pioneered processes for resolution and peace, women and their demands have largely been excluded from negotiation mechanisms and peace agreements. In the 1990s, in the wake of the wars and genocides in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, feminist and peace-oriented women organized international campaigns to prosecute rape and sexual violence as war crimes. As a result of women's struggle, in 2000 the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 to prevent and address gender-based violence during armed conflict and to ensure women's participation in peace processes. However, UN data show that women were actively involved in only 6% of the peace agreements signed between 1992 and 2019. Research shows that dialogue and peace processes that do not include women's wills and

perspectives are bound to fail and cannot build a lasting social peace. The probability of peace agreements being implemented increases by 35% when women are involved in the processes. However, it is also important that women's participation is not merely symbolic, i.e., not elitist. This makes it all the more important that women from all walks of life are able to participate in the discussion processes and, through representatives of the women's movement, can effectively contribute their wishes and demands to peace agreements and implement them.

The search for true answers to these questions is essential to the success of the process. Establishing peace and a democratic society is only possible through a paradigm shift in politics, science, and society. A free life in dignity and peace can only develop if the causes of war and conflict are investigated and eliminated. If this does not happen, a new dictator will replace the previous one. The experiences of women in many countries around the world show that fundamental

intellectual, political, economic, and social changes are necessary to prevent the recurrence of war and genocide. The history of Kurdish women serves as an example that in the most critical moments, women can, through unity of thought, spirit, and struggle, channel the power and energy to change history.

REPAK

Kurdish Women's Relations
Office

aşktır.

**Aşk özgür
yaşamdır.**

Call for Peace and a Democratic Society — and Women

Throughout history, women have carried the heaviest burden of wars and felt their destructive effects most deeply. In times of war, gender roles are reconstructed, and women face violence, harassment, rape, discrimination, poverty, deprivation, forced displacement from their homes, and ecological destruction. We have painfully experienced these realities in the wars within our own geography.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Şengal, we have witnessed how women's bodies became "battlefields," how women were sold in slave

markets, and how sexual violence against women was used not as an individual crime but as a systematic strategy of war. Such violence makes it extremely difficult for women to reintegrate into social life and cope with their trauma in post-war periods. In wars, women not only lose their loved ones but also endure deep, lifelong traumas. We must remember that war brings cultural, economic, social, and psychological destruction to women's lives. Therefore, being against war is not enough; to build peace and rebuild women's lives in post-war societies, women's solidarity and organized struggle must grow stronger. The Middle East, where we

live, has for centuries been turned into a center of wars, occupations, political instability, and identity and sectarian conflicts. Opposing imperialist interventions and building a free, equal, and peaceful future where peoples live together requires the leadership of women. The male-dominated, militarist, sexist, religious, and nationalist politics can only be overcome through the organized struggle and resistance of women.

As women from Kurdistan, we are aware that Kurdistan—divided by the nation-states of Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey and made the epicenter of war and crisis—is also the key to overcoming this chaos and leading the peoples of the Middle East toward a peaceful and democratic future. While we resist the denial of our identity and culture, and the politics of war, occupation, and exploitation, we also base our struggle on solidarity and common struggle with the peoples we live alongside, for a shared free future.

The call made by Mr. Abdullah Öcalan on February 27, 2025 for Peace and a Democratic

Society is not only significant for Turkey and Bakur (Northern Kurdistan) but also for Rojava, Rojhilat, and Başur, and for all peoples and women of the Middle East—Kurds, Persians, Arabs, Armenians, and Turkmen alike. As women, we see this call not only as the silencing of weapons but as an opportunity to build a democratic, ecological, and women's freedom-oriented life and to overcome male domination. The process initiated by Mr. Öcalan represents not an end but a new phase of struggle. Ensuring constitutional and legal guarantees for the freedom and equality demands of the Kurdish people and women, and legally recognizing Kurdish identity, are crucial steps to ending the politics of denial.

For this process to succeed in Turkey, the unity and solidarity of Kurdish women and the Kurdish people are not merely a choice but a necessity. Throughout history, the Kurdish people's losses have often stemmed from fragmentation and lack of organization. Therefore, wherever we live in the world,

our shared struggle to secure the status and freedom of the Kurdish people will empower both our people and women. In this sense, the success of Mr. Öcalan's Call for Peace and a Democratic Society depends on his own freedom and on the recognition of Kurdish status and identity. Kurdish women's role in advancing both democratic and internationalist struggles is essential.

Aware of this reality, TJA (Free Women's Movement) continues to hold deep discussions on Mr. Abdullah Öcalan's February 27 call and new period manifesto—both on the ideological level and in practice—to build a democratic socialist life. We know that without women's freedom, society cannot be free, and that women can only achieve freedom through organized struggle. Our political work is shaped by this understanding. At the time of writing, as TJA, we are preparing for November 25 – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, planning and discussing how to make women's demands for peace and freedom more visible in the streets. While women resist male domination, they also raise their voices

against war, occupation, and exploitation, discussing the paths and methods of building peace and free life.

It is time to elevate the organized struggle to socialize the Jin, Jiyan, Azadî (Woman, Life, Freedom) philosophy—the symbol of women's peace struggle against forced migration, disappearances, poverty, sexual violence, loss of family members, militarism, trauma, and the patriarchal perception that treats women's bodies as symbols of “moral order.”

The Kurdish women's struggle for peace is also an effort to transform traditional, male-dominated politics. In this sense, the women's movement in Kurdistan is an inspiration for both Middle Eastern and global women's movements. From the Rojava Revolution to the Jin, Jiyan, Azadî uprising in Iran, and to the struggles of women in Turkey resisting war and exploitation, Kurdish women are striving to bring to life a democratic, ecological, and women's freedom-oriented paradigm—one that continues to inspire the international women's struggle.

Sebahat Tuncel



Steps Toward Peace and the Role of the Kurds

During this period, the peace process initiated under the leadership of Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) was sincerely embraced by the Kurdish people. At its 12th Congress, the PKK decided to cease its armed struggle. Following this decision, in a symbolic ceremony, the guerrillas burned their weapons before the eyes of the world. With this step, the armed conflict came to an end, and the movement withdrew its forces from Turkey's borders.

This development was welcomed not only by the Kurds but also by many international circles. Kurdish politicians, researchers, and

citizens from all four parts of Kurdistan regarded these actions as a sincere and genuine sign of commitment to the peace process.

Turkey's Steps and the Constitutional Solution

If Turkey truly wants to achieve peace, it must move beyond tactical maneuvers and adopt a genuine policy of reconciliation. The Turkish state knows well that without the Kurds, whose population is estimated at between 25 and 30 million, it cannot sustain its authority. The Kurdish question remains the most fundamental issue for Turkey. The Kurds seek peace, not war.

By releasing prisoners, halting bombardments, and taking steps toward dialogue with the Kurds, Turkey is attempting to create a new atmosphere. However, these are not decisive measures, because a real solution to the peace process requires constitutional and legal change. Turkey must embrace the spirit of peace and recognize the Kurds' rights as a distinct nation within the state. This must be realized through constitutional reform, and all supporters of peace must work from this foundation.

The Need to Focus on Legitimate Demands and National Unity

Kurds must remain firm in their legitimate rights and demands. The political landscape has changed, and although old obstacles still exist, new opportunities have emerged. Kurds must prepare open, inclusive, and flexible strategies. Even under occupying powers, the demand for self-governance within a defined region is both legitimate and necessary. This vision should be pursued through dialogue, diplomacy,

and unity among Kurds. Without national unity, this dream will remain unfulfilled.

The Importance of National Unity in Protecting Achievements

National unity is the most crucial safeguard for every patriotic Kurd. Without unity, our rights and achievements cannot be protected. The freedom of Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan), the gains of Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), the peace efforts in Northern Kurdistan (Turkey), and the resistance in Eastern Kurdistan (Iran) were all achieved through great sacrifices and the blood of martyrs.

Therefore, there is no alternative to unity and solidarity. Although achieving unity across all parts of Kurdistan is difficult, only through internal cohesion can we stand firm against oppression and defend our values.

The Role of Women in National Unity

Kurdish women have long faced double oppression, once for being Kurdish and again for

being women. Yet they have always resisted and achieved great progress. The unity of Kurdish women across all parts of Kurdistan is a crucial factor in preserving culture, fostering social harmony, and building a democratic society. Therefore, women's initiatives in this area are deeply meaningful and essential.

The Struggle of Kurdish Women for Freedom

Throughout Kurdish history, many brave and self-sacrificing women have emerged, from Leyla Qasim to Sakine Cansiz and the women fighters of Rojava. Their struggle under the slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" (Woman, Life, Freedom) has gained international recognition.

This struggle has become a major source of inspiration for the women of Eastern Kurdistan and Iran. The uprising in Rojhilat amplified the voices of women across the world and became a model for global women's movements. Today, Kurdish women continue to march alongside women everywhere, united in their struggle for freedom and equality.

The Future of Women's Struggle and the Need for Unity

Today, Kurdish women are establishing their own platforms in every part of Kurdistan and preparing for the Third National Congress of Kurdish Women. Through this congress, they aim to build a consensus that unites all Kurdish women under one framework, enabling them to play a decisive political role in shaping the future.

Such national congresses can serve as models for building a new democratic constitution. However, there is still a long road ahead, and it is vital that women raise their voices together to confront ongoing injustices.

Our society continues to suffer from violence against women and children, economic dependency, patriarchal domination, social inequality, and discrimination rooted in religious and traditional practices. To overcome these challenges, a democratic and egalitarian system is essential. Women must take the lead in building such a system.

For this reason, strengthening national unity must be seen as a fundamental duty for women. We must resist war and injustice and pave the way for peace. Motherhood gives women a sacred responsibility, the protection of our language and national culture.

The Responsibility of Kurdish Women

Kurdish women must remain alert and attentive to all political and social developments. They must sustain continuous struggle and cooperation to strengthen the unity of Kurdish women and the Kurdish people as a whole. In the end, women must transform their pain and differences into energy for resistance.

To achieve women's liberation and the realization of Kurdish identity, the responsibilities before us must be fully understood and embraced. Through unity, dialogue, and women's leadership, the Kurdish people can build a peaceful and democratic future.

Şanî Mihemed
Women's Activist



Democratic Integration and the Power of the Women's Revolution

On the 27th of February, Reber Apo made a historic call from Imrali Prison, alongside the other detainees. A document titled "The Manifesto for Peace and a Democratic Society" opened new doors; not just for Turkey or the Turkish people, but for all of the Middle East, particularly Rojava, Syria, South Kurdistan and East Kurdistan.

This manifesto was very important for the Kurds and for all the peoples of the region in terms of getting their rights constitutionally secured. At the same time it was a foundational stone for different peoples to be able to live a free and equal life or, in other words, for a life of democratic integration. Reber Apo was not

only presenting a political vision. His call was at the same time the arrival of a powerful paradigm of peace, in the face of the war being waged in the region and the division that occupation seeks to implement.

The Historical Impact on Rojava and Syria

In Rojava, there was a very positive impact after the manifesto was published. This influence opened the way for societal developments that had never before been witnessed in the region's history. Additionally, the video that came directly from Reber Apo himself in Imrali after years, built up big emotions and morale. Led by women, people

showed their happiness to the whole world through celebrations. In all cities, from Qamishlo to Kobane, from Heseke to Derik, women and people filled the streets with slogans of peace and democratic unity.

This process is a vital point for Syria. Reber Apo had undertaken a considerable endeavour for Syria for a long time, politically, culturally and socially, making serious efforts such that different peoples be able to live together. The work that began in 1979 was crowned with the Rojava Revolution as the work of twenty years – and returned to a practice of people's revolution that has been going on for 14 years.

The Political and Military Impacts of the Manifesto

Reber Apo's Peace and Democracy manifesto not only presented an ideological framework, but also enabled the cessation of the fighting that was underway in Syria. After the manifesto was announced, the clashes that had been ongoing at the Tishreen Dam, Qereqozak

Bridge, Deir Hafir, Deir ez-Zor, Tel Tamir and Zirgan, were stopped. At the same time, the bombing from the Turkish state also stopped.

This situation enabled there to be dialogue and grounds for new negotiations between the Damascus government and the Kurdish forces. That is to say, it became the means of doing this. On the 10th of March, the agreement signed between Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, in the name of the transitional government in Damascus, and commander of the SDF, Mazlum Abdi, in the name of the Kurds, was seen as a practical reflection of the manifesto. This entered history as a document. This agreement marked the first time in Syrian history that the Kurds were recognised and accepted as a side in a formal document. One can also say that this document was signed thanks to the years of hard work of Reber Apo; the Kurds achieved this mission in Rojava.

In order to stop the war, the agreement included the announcement of a ceasefire, the commitment to the return

of displaced peoples, and the democratic integration of the SDF inside the Syrian army. In this way, it opened the door for the Kurds to have all their democratic, linguistic, cultural, and identity rights recognised as Syrian citizens.

In Syria, the call of Reber Apo, surpassed the mentality of ethnic identity and brought forward the concept of the free and democratic citizen. Everyone was a democratic part of the Syrian state: Kurds, Arabs, Druze, Syriac and other peoples, women, the youth, and elderly people all included. Additionally, even if there is still no concrete progress with the negotiations, it was the topic of international discussion, it was internationally accepted, and the road was opened such that the basis for talking terms and agreements with the current government was laid.

The Women's Revolution: The Strongest Leg in the Peace Process

In the framework of the ideology that Reber Apo developed, the basis of peace is seen not just as social

equality but also women's freedom. In Rojava and all of North and East Syria, the role of women in the women's revolution is the most concrete example of this.

After the manifesto, women played a leading role in the fields of politics, education, economics, defence and all social arenas. The women's councils, co-chair system, defence units and regional administration based on gender equality are the products of this process and the 20-years-long effort of Reber Apo.

The process of peace and democracy showed the whole world that women are not victims of war; in contrast, they are the builders of the peace process. In Syria, women are not just seen as a part of society but also as the constructive power of the democratic system.

Reber Apo opened a new door with the process he initiated, both in Turkey and in Syria. This process showed that different peoples can live together in democratic unity and demonstrate this will to

everyone, against policies of war and destruction.

This process in Syria enabled the clashes to end, both militarily and politically. Different peoples are gathering around a common constitution and leading the way for a democratic future. Women are at the centre of this process, which shows that a women-centred social model is possible, not just Syria but for all of the Middle East.

This manifesto is not just a document, but a philosophy of peoples living together; it has become the manifesto of women's freedom and democratic peace.

Emine Osê

Spokeswoman of the
Committee for Democratic
Relations of Kongra Star



Wherever there is a scent of peace and democracy, women are there

Now, the Middle East, especially Kurdistan, is undergoing rapid changes, as the politics and diplomacy of dominant systems and nation-states only cause war, destruction, and killing. On one hand, women become victims of patriarchal policies, and on the other hand, women become the leading force for changing patriarchal policies. In other words, the issues that have caused such great and decisive difference in a place like Kurdistan and elsewhere must be discussed here.

Now, as the “Peace and Democratic Society” process moves forward in Northern Kurdistan, women are at the forefront to secure success because they have a correct

reading of history. The history of Kurdistan has shown that Kurds have always tried to live together with others in the region. In other words, society, especially women, has not been in favor of war. Thanks to the ideology of leader Abdullah Ocalan and the 52-year struggle of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, this effort has intensified. In other words, the culture of resistance and the defense of societal values developed deeply in all sectors of society. This means that the beginning of this process is within the framework of raising the level of the existing struggle. After 52 years of relentless struggle, the Kurds have entered a new phase. Not only has Kurdish existence not been destroyed, but it has also

become a source of hope and courage for other nations.

Undoubtedly, we know that every part of Kurdistan has an impact on other parts of Kurdistan. This impact has been more apparent during sensitive times. For example, the struggle to fight against ISIS paved the way for national unity. Kurdish success is fundamentally rooted in the feeling of unity and in steps toward unity. The phase that has begun in Northern Kurdistan has impacted other parts of Kurdistan. In its 52 years of uninterrupted struggle, the Kurdistan Freedom Movement has shown that it can organize society in different sectors, fight courageously and play a role, as well as lead the way for peace and democracy. For this reason, women are leading this project. Because they know that the success of this process will lead to a democratic life for both Kurds and other nations.

In Southern Kurdistan, society has always turned to Northern Kurdistan, recognizing how the Kurdish people in the North have managed to raise the cry

for democracy and freedom. Especially in a conservative gender system, how can women have a say in political and social spheres? How has civil society organized to sustain itself under difficult conditions? In Southern Kurdistan, despite the gains made in the South, women are still excluded from many issues and they criticize the patriarchal policies in the region. Women in Northern and Western Kurdistan are participating in politics at the highest level. In other words, we can say that the message of this process is fundamentally an effort to unite and strengthen the Kurdish people in all parts of Kurdistan.

This process will serve both Kurdish unity and the establishment of democracy, leading to a shared life among different nations. In other words, a multi-ethnic process is meanwhile underway. For example, to what extent can Kurdish politics address the demands of other nations in all parts of Kurdistan? Kurdish women have proven through their struggle that they are patriots, but besides caring for

their own country and nation, they also respect other ethnic differences and can live with other nations. The message of this phase is that the nation-state cannot sustain the politics it currently pursues, and a system must be established that can represent all ethnic, cultural, and religious differences in an effective and democratic way. Therefore, we have seen that this phase is supported not only in Kurdistan, but also in the Middle East and the world. Women, as a part of society that always distances itself from war and fights for peace, express their support for this process wherever they are because they know that the dominant system does not understand society's problems.

Sara Kurdistanî
Political activist